Update

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Working with Tommy, I sometimes need a break, so I take myself off to my bees for a chat. They are very friendly and don't answer back. Even with up to 40,000 bees in one hive! I keep my hives on our farm on the Sussex Downs to crop wild flower honey.

In his happy place

The purple pollen 'baskets'

We have been growing our English coriander for 4 years now in Sussex and I have noticed the bees visit the coriander fields in great abundance. This year I put one of my hives beside our 3 coriander fields (total 25 acres). To ask bees to collect from just one floral source (coriander) is like eating porridge day-after-day but they seem to have taken to it.

The main wild-flowering period is April to June and then there can be a gap until later flowerings. June to July is just when the coriander is in flower so it seemed ideal to fill what beekeepers call the 'June gap'.

Coriander does not produce much nectar. Nectar is what the bees will convert into honey on their return to the hive. There is plenty of pollen which they collect in 'balloons', on their back legs. All pollen differs in colour depending on which floral source it comes from – rape is yellow, chestnut is red and coriander is purple.
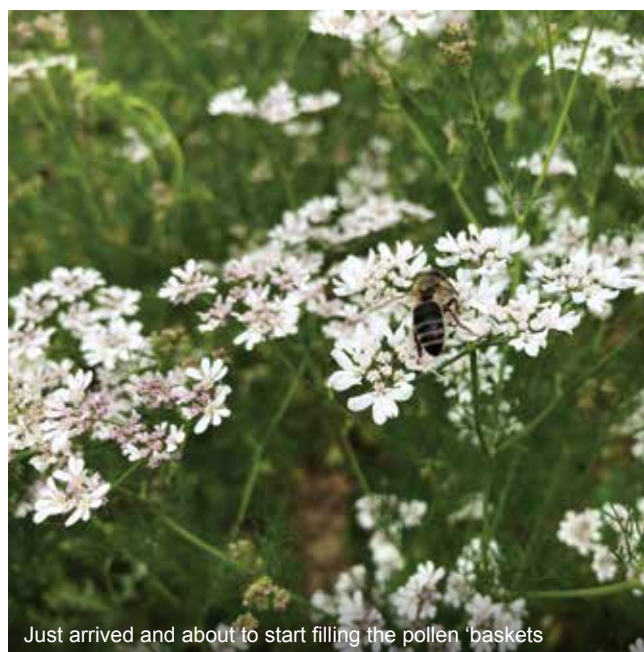
Two happy beekeepers with matching hats

Pollen is very important to the hive – it is fed to the Queen with honey and to the emerging young bees. In short, pollen is a high protein feed. I do not expect to crop much coriander honey but I hope the pollen will feed them through the winter. Interestingly, to produce one teaspoon of honey, a bee needs to fly up to 30,000 miles – that's some commute to work!

Bees are under great pressure from modern farming methods, disease, poor weather and other insects such as Asian hornets. Without these pollinators our crop yields would be severely damaged. So as well as giving me a break from Tommy they also form an integral part of our English coriander crop. Added to this, we can safely say the English coriander seed grown by us and used in Gin, helps these hard-working pollinators to prepare for the winter.

The flower has already started to turn to seed

Just arrived and about to start filling the pollen 'baskets